

## **Press Release**

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### **Mark Opilla Receives Most Valuable JWOD Liaison Award**

Arlington, VA – Mark Opilla was honored today by the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (Committee) for his decade of support to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. Providing jobs to more than 46,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, the JWOD Program is the single largest source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. This award recognizes JWOD Liaisons' significant contributions in creating employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled within their respective Federal agencies. JWOD liaisons are the front line, providing the Committee, National Industries for the Blind, NISH (serving people with a range of severe disabilities), and JWOD-participating nonprofit agencies with procurement news and information from their agencies. Liaisons also disseminate JWOD information throughout their organizations.

"Mark Opilla's decade of unwavering support to the JWOD Program is commendable. He has been an exemplary JWOD Liaison. His efforts have helped create stable, meaningful employment for individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities," said Andrew Houghton, Committee Chairperson.

Opilla is a Procurement Analyst in the Small Business Office of the Naval Supply Systems Command, under the Department of the Navy. Particularly noteworthy is his success in serving as a facilitator and advisor to Navy Contracting offices, while at the same time, working with JWOD-participating nonprofit agencies, assisting them in the development of products and services suitable for Navy procurement. Opilla has also made significant contributions to the work of the Committee's Finance and Information Management Subcommittee and to the JWOD Program Strategic Plan. He has supported five admirals who have served as the Department of the Navy Committee representatives during his tenure.

The Most Valuable Liaison Award was presented at the NIB National Training Conference in Scottsdale, AZ.

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The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled is an independent Federal agency that administers the JWOD Program, which creates employment opportunities for persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The

Committee's primary means of achieving its employment goal is through orchestrating Government purchases of supplies and services from nonprofit agencies employing such individuals.

National Industries for the Blind is one of the two national, nonprofit organizations designated by the Committee to assist in the implementation of the JWOD Program. Together with NISH, which serves people with a range of disabilities, these two agencies assist over 600 community-based nonprofit agencies participate in the JWOD Program.